



'TRAVEL LIKE A TERRAPIN' THOUGHT LEADERSHIP SERIES

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# FLOW MECHANICS

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PAPER ONE

## RESILIENCE

# Flow mechanics: What social entrepreneurs have in common with terrapins

From social capital to individual characteristics to a sense of purpose, resilient entrepreneurs share several common characteristics with these all-star amphibians...and each other.

The *Travel like a Terrapin* series illuminates the power of **the Greatest Migration** story, revealing how emerging entrepreneurs represent an expansive source of yet-unrealized economic value creation.



Guides often tell rafters that if they fall into the rapids, the best way to get to safety is to swim with the current—not against it. These “flow mechanics” in a river present both challenges and opportunities, and managing this rapidly changing environment requires resilience.

There is a good reason why resilience is an ever-present theme in the business world and across our broader societies. Scale is important, but bigger doesn’t necessarily always translate to better outcomes. To survive and thrive in a world that is quickly changing in profound ways, the ability to endure and adapt may prove to be the winning strategy. For both the entrepreneur, and the terrapin.

**SO WHAT EXACTLY IS A TERRAPIN?**

Terrapins, tortoises and sea turtles are all members of the same family of animals we call turtles. But unlike tortoises (which live on land) or sea turtles (which live mainly in the water), terrapins are amphibians—giving them some key advantages.

**SACRED SHELLS**

Terrapins have a long history of spiritual significance across cultures and geographies, particularly among indigenous peoples. They often represented Mother Earth in creation mythology, and could be observed in caves and petroglyphs. Terrapins represented the traits of health, long life, wisdom and perseverance.

In many East Asian cultures, the turtle is a symbol of longevity. In China, “divine” turtles are said to be 5,000 years old or more, and “spiritual” turtles being 10,000 years old or more. Some ancient texts describe the turtle as having five colors representing the five elements.

As we explore the future of enterprises that will rapidly evolve our communities and economies for mutual benefit, the terrapin has much inspiration and wisdom to offer us!

## INGENIOUS EVOLUTION

Aesop was onto something. After all, “The Tortoise and the Hare” made its main character one of the most famous turtles of all time, conveying how the tortoise used ingenuity to beat an arguably stronger competitor.

In the natural world, terrapins are known for being remarkably adaptable to both salt and fresh water, having a bio-mechanism that helps expel excess salt from their bodies. That means they can often go where tortoises or sea turtles cannot. Their amphibious nature, teardrop-shaped shell (perfect for diving) and adaptability among other traits give terrapins a terrific advantage.

Purpose-led entrepreneurs’ collective strengths of resilience and adaptability are rising to meet the demands of a changing world.

Purpose-led entrepreneurs are also evolving as a group. But instead of biological features, they are developing traits needed to survive in the business world of today and tomorrow. It is their collective strengths of resilience and adaptability that are rising to meet the demands of a changing world. Their businesses are designing products and services around the needs of local and global communities, taking into consideration the impacts of global supply chain disruptions, climate change challenges and resource scarcity.

**582**

**MILLION  
ENTREPRENEURS**

identified unmet needs  
in their communities  
and markets in 2020.

Report by Global Entrepreneurship  
Monitor (GEM)

## UNIQUELY ADAPTED

The diamondback terrapin of North America is the only turtle species that lives its entire life in coastal salt marshes—one of the most productive ecosystems on the planet, with abundant food and resources.

Smaller, purpose-led entrepreneurs are also uniquely adapted to their environment. They face significant embedded obstacles, and learn adaptive ways to overcome them. They have met resource scarcity, working poverty and structural disadvantages head on.

One way they do this is by tapping their social capital. But this social capital is not driven by likes, scrolls or clicks. Rather, these entrepreneurs are members of a mutual community who work together to fill in life's gaps.

## REDEFINING RAPID

Turtles are not an animal most people would associate with speed. But the tortoise in Aesop's fable reminds us that ingenuity and resourcefulness can translate to efficiency and effectiveness that helps win races.

Entrepreneurs are also constantly rethinking how perform tasks faster or better, or both. They are at the vanguard of innovation, experimenting with technology to do more with less, while making purpose central to their business model from the beginning. And many are helping identify the next generation of talented entrepreneurs by tapping their own communities—and finding value that others have overlooked.

**84%**  
**OF CONSUMERS**

trust recommendations from friends, family, and colleagues over other forms of advertising, emphasizing the significance of community in business success. Community-based businesses have a higher rate of survival compared to non-community-based ones.

Survey by Deloitte + data from the Small Business Administration (SBA)

**60%**  
**OF SUCCESSFUL ENTREPRENEURS**

identified and adapted to market needs, demonstrating the importance of adaptability in entrepreneurial success.

A study by the Kauffman Foundation

### SMALL IS BEAUTIFUL

For more than 200 million years, terrapins have survived and evolved. One of the most overlooked adaptive traits is size. But bigger isn't always mightier. Terrapins tend to be smaller, and that is a source of advantage.

Because of their size, small entrepreneurs must be nimble, agile and able to rapidly navigate a range of hazards and opportunities. These are considerable advantages over larger competitors, many of whom envy these very traits because they are often lacking within those bigger organizations.

**SMALLER  
BUSINESSES ARE**

**1.4X**

more likely to have an innovation advantage over larger ones.

(A study by Harvard Business Review)



## RESILIENCE IN ACTION

Learn more about how purpose-led entrepreneurs in the real world are making change and creating value.



### Hilda Mera, S&A Auto Repair

Hilda, an immigrant from Ecuador, opened her auto body shop in Newark in 2013. As well as professional auto services, S&A Auto Repairs empowers their communities, in particular women, through their Educational Auto Workshops to empower their clientele to be more independent. S&A Auto Repairs is dedicated to exceptional customer service which has allowed them to grow to the successful business they are today. “We’re creating jobs and creating a safe space for vulnerable people, often women, to feel less dread when getting auto repair services.”

[www.sautoshop.com](http://www.sautoshop.com)



### Java Bradley, Java's Compost

Java started Java's Compost because they realized there was no convenient and easy way for people to compost their food scraps and they wanted to create a service that would accomplish that. Though the company started as a family venture, it has quickly grown into a thriving compost community, green team of compost warriors, and Java's Compost warehouse in Orange, NJ with expanded services including residential and commercial pickups, municipal and community drop-offs, and consulting services. They have also set up schools and colleges with on-site composting solutions that reduce food waste and generate thousands of pounds of precious, black gold each year.

[www.javascompost.com](http://www.javascompost.com)



### Djenaba Johnson-Jones, Hudson Kitchen

Djenaba wanted to create a health, fitness and food concierge service. Hudson Kitchen provides a commercial kitchen for entrepreneurs in the food industry to use in New Jersey where these services were unavailable. This, coupled with her 'Food Business Bootcamp' which is a course in starting up a business in the food industry, has rapidly grown into a flourishing and impactful movement. Djenaba works tirelessly to grow and expand the impact of Hudson Kitchen and facilitate the flourishing of new entrepreneurs.

[www.thehudsonkitchen.com](http://www.thehudsonkitchen.com)





Next in our 'Travel Like a Terrapin' series:

**Big-and-small data:** How structured and inclusive metrics can level the playing field